

Application No. 09/937172
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Amendment
Attorney Docket No H82.2I-10148-US01.

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please cancel claims 1-8, without prejudice.

1-8. (Canceled)

9. (Currently Amended) A method for manufacturing feed pellets having an initial pore volume and fat content said method comprising:

A. extruding pellets from a feed material within a pellet extruder having a discharge nozzle;

B. exposing said extruded pellets to a first pressure lower than ambient pressure immediately subsequent to said extruding step, said exposure to ~~[[a]]~~ said first pressure lower than ambient pressure occurring in a pellet chamber downstream from said discharge nozzle, whereby said pellets expand and increase said pore volume;

C. drying said pellets exposed to said pressure; and

D. subsequently adding oil to said pellets to increase said fat content for said pellets.

10. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 9, wherein said adding step occurs during said drying step.

11. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 9, wherein said pellets are exposed to said first pressure for a period of time not exceeding one minute, said drying step comprising exposure of said pellets to a second pressure, said second pressure being lower than ambient pressure, said drying step further comprising drying at a temperature below 100 degrees Celsius.

12. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 11, wherein said first pressure and said second pressure are different from each other.

13. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 9, said drying step comprising an oil bath acting as a deep-frying treatment.

14. (Previously Presented) A plant for manufacturing feed pellets said plant comprising:

A. a pelletizing machine constructed and arranged for shaping said pellets;

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B. a pellet chamber adjacent to and downstream from said pelletizing machine, said pellet chamber having an outlet, said pellet chamber being constructed and arranged to expose said pellets to a pressure lower than ambient pressure; and

C. a tank containing oil, said tank being in communication with said outlet, said tank comprising a deep-frying container, said tank being constructed and arranged to expose said pellets to a second pressure lower than ambient pressure.

15. (Previously Presented) The plant according to claim 14, wherein said pressure is between 100 and 800 millibars.
16. (Previously Presented) The plant according to claim 14, wherein said second pressure is between 100 and 800 millibars.
17. (Previously Presented) The plant according to claim 14, wherein said pressure and said second pressure are different from each other.
18. (Previously Presented) The plant according to claim 14, further comprising a lock body between said pellet chamber and said tank.
19. (Previously Presented) The plant according to claim 18, wherein said lock body rotates, said lock body being constructed and arranged to move pellets out of said pellet chamber.
20. (Previously Presented) The plant according to claim 18, said pellet chamber comprising a first vacuum pump, said first vacuum pump constructed and arranged to maintain said pellet chamber at said pressure lower than said ambient pressure, said tank comprising a second vacuum pump, said second vacuum pump constructed and arranged to maintain said second pressure lower than said ambient pressure.
21. (Previously Presented) The plant according to claim 20, wherein said second pressure is different from said pressure.
22. (Previously Presented) The plant according to claim 21, wherein said second pressure is lower than said pressure.